

How to Practice, Six/ Three/ Four

How to practice to achieve your goal of becoming a great clarinetist.

Six days each: Try to practice everything six days, though seven is even better.

Three hours a day: Minimum of two, four and five on weekends, the more the better.

Four times each: Practice everything that's difficult A LEAST four times a day.

Go over the difficult spots by taking it apart. Try playing it in dotted rhythm or using tenuto on some notes. Practice one note to the other, than three notes, then four etc. Memorize the few beats or measures you have trouble with and play it with your eyes closed. Play those spots over and over again, even if you have to repeat it twenty times every day until it's in your fingers. It's called finger memorization.

After a few days, if you realize you can't prepare everything, concentrate on what you can accomplish perfectly. Leave one or two etudes for the following week but go over them a couple of times a day slowly so you can master it the following week. What we don't do one week we will do the following week.

Etudes - play through an etude. After isolating and working on the difficult spots try to play everything through four times at a tempo you can play it, stopping to work on the difficult spots. Slow etudes – play through once or twice a day as needed to develop a good tone, intonation, legato and phrasing. Go over any spots that need work.

Scales, chords – These need to be perfect, smooth and fast. These are the passageways to a good technique. Go over them so you can play them at least four times a day without making a mistake and increasing the tempo each day when possible. The idea is to know it so well that your “fingers” do it by themselves. Practicing by rote has its place in obtaining good technique and this is where you begin. These are number one for good technique.

Solo and excerpts – practice as above. The difficult passages should be worked on like an etude, like a Kroepsch study, playing the short passages, 2-4 measures, over and over, slow at first working up the tempo over time. The longer passages practice as an etude. If you can't play it slow, you can't play it fast.

TECHNIQUE – remember, technique is king. A beautiful tone, good intonation, playing musically, solid rhythm and good interpretation is what makes one player stand out from another but you **MUST** be able to play the notes first, in tempo and in the right place. Without solid technique everything else becomes secondary at an audition. With good technique, everything else becomes the most important things. Edward Palanker